

Fake Dreams and the World of the Fake Unconscious

When I was a teenage boy I had a dream which wasn't simply Freudian - It was a parody of a Freudian dream.

I was on a London Underground train in the subterranean tunnels of the capitol. I was searching through the carriages to find my lost saxophone. I had lost my saxophone on an underground train.

I woke up. I thought about it. I was amazed.

My dream had been an obvious PARODY of Freudian dream analysis.

That was the first time I realised that my unconscious mind had its own sense of humour, existing separately to my own sense of humour.

Since then, as the years have gone by, I've come to realise that my unconscious will sometimes construct jokes and ironic patterns which are there for me to find. If I happen to notice them.

If I don't notice them until sometime later I feel as though I need to be paying more attention to the unconscious.

When I pay more attention to it my unconscious and I can work as a team. I suspect that my unconscious mind could be my long sought after soul mate.

What of "The Collective Unconscious"? I've always thought it sounded like a French hippy commune where people are asleep all the time.

I don't think I've ever had nightmares. Certainly not the kind of nightmares described in fiction, where the dreamer is being chased or menaced by monsters or terrible things. The nearest I've ever experienced to a nightmare was "sleep paralysis" when I was in my 20s. If you've read other chapters of this evolving book you'll remember that I was hypnotised and brainwashed by a pseudo-religious cult for six and a half years from the age of 20 to the age of 27. It was during those years that I would sometimes wake up in the morning unable to move for several long minutes, temporarily paralysed while beset by a ringing, jingling sound in my ears and a strange silvery look in the air around me. The leaders of the group meetings in the Emin cult always explained this effect away by saying "It's the force. Some different silvery force was coming in from beyond the planet and you woke up just in time to witness it".

That whole way of thinking with it's concept of channeling forces and being connected to angels and other spirits from "The Unseen Worlds" is based in a Gurdjieff derived version of Sufi whirling dervishes and of physical and mental changes in the functional operation of the brain through hypnosis, drugs and vertigo. The vertigo achieved through the whirling dance has been studied through the use of MRI brain scans and shows differences between the cortical thickness of the brains of Sufis compared with the brains of control groups. The significance of these differences is open to debate. In the Emin groups vertigo-inducing forms of dance were seldom practised and references to supernatural forces were predominantly anecdotal. I can remember meetings where Emin members were bragging to each other with a kind of post-hippy gusto about seeing "all these balls and bars" emerging from an Emin "Resolve" poster or "loads of silver rain and auras of blue and gold". They sounded like flower children on cubes of acid but they dressed in suits like up-and-coming supermarket management.

I never saw any of these "balls and bars" or "fairies and elementals" or transparent "Egyptian headdresses" which the other Emin people claimed they could see but I did get sleep paralysis sometimes and it was accompanied by a silvery looking and bell tinkling hallucination.

I think they were putting something in the tea. I think they were doing what the Americans would call "roofying us". The level of gullibility which I and others experienced suggests that something akin to Rohypnol was being used, although it may have been a legal herbal equivalent. The result was the same. We believed impossible things and we gave them our wages from our jobs every week.

On one occasion in a meeting at Winscombe Street church hall I was sitting facing a young woman who called herself by the Emin name of "Lo-Anne" (which obviously anagrammed to "Alone") and we had begun a strange little word game in which we each said the opposite of the other. If I said some sentence containing the word "up" Lo-Anne would reply with a sentence containing the word "down". If I said a phrase containing "east" she would reply with a sentence containing "west". If she said something containing the word "in" I would reply with something containing "out". When I said "on top" Lo-Anne said "underneath". And so on. We were getting more and more into this game and other people in the room seemed to have faded into inconsequence as we entered a sort of dream world of wordplay. Then suddenly I realised that I had wet myself.

Disaster! I was wearing the sort of trousers which people wore in those days, very tight flared green jeans, and there was a very obvious wet page of urine spreading across the front of them. I quickly and carefully got up out of the chair and sidled to the cloakroom to get my coat. I don't think anyone noticed the wet patch. The other people in the room were also seated in twos and threes and were seemingly getting lost in their own strange dreamworlds. I put on my coat. Damn! It was shorty "car-coat" sort of thing which was fashionable at the time. I buttoned it up and thrust my hands into the pockets to hold it down as much as possible to cover the wet patch. I quickly explained to Lo-Anne that I had to go. She followed me out the door of the church hall desperately asking me if she should come with me. I said "Oh no, no, I'm going home..." I hurried away leaving her looking bewildered.

I got to Tufnell Park underground station and got on a train back home to my mum's house at Morden. I didn't think of it at the time but, in retrospect, there was definitely something being put in the tea.

In my daytime studies I was continually trying to make sense of the things they were "teaching" us in the group meetings. Trying to find links and meanings which would lead to some great understanding of life, the universe and everything.

At night in my dreams I was always exploring avenues, roads, streets, alleyways, rooms, corridors, passages, connecting footpaths and crawlspaces and country lanes. Structures, in other words, finding the way, following the path, linking the links.

I became very concerned about the lack of factual content in the Emin. I was waking up but very slowly, over several years. One thing which concerned me a lot was the Christian need to do good works in the world. The Emin leaders pooh-poohed the idea of doing volunteer work for charities and community projects. They told me I should forget all that and concentrate on "this Emin".

I was very puzzled about the Emin attitude to virtuous qualities.

They talked about Care, Patience and Humility. They talked about Love, Honour and Respect. They talked about Faith, Hope and Charity and so on and so on and so on. Virtuous qualities. But they never practised any of these qualities and they actively discouraged me from doing so. Instead of practising these qualities they anagrammed them. For several years I observed Emin people in groups trying to find the real meaning of virtuous qualities by anagramming them. We were told that the letters in the English alphabet each had their own specific meanings. "A" meant ancient and original, "B" meant blood, "C" meant emotional, "D" meant bad qualities like down and degraded and devil but one third of "D" words meant good things like divine and delicious.

And so on to the end of the alphabet. The 26th letter of the alphabet, "Zed" in English or "Zee" in American, meant the cosmic birth and creation track (which was never explained to us so we had to use our imaginations).

Through a mixture of alphabet "meanings", anagramming and numerology Emin people discussed whether "Care" was a sort of race you could run or whether it was "Ace" in repetition (the meaning of the letter "R"). They talked about whether "Patience" a "Nice Tape" or whether "Humility" was a "Limy Hut of I".

We were told that the alphabet divided into four parts. The letters "A" to "I" were the sun level alphabet, the letters "J" to "O" were the planetary level alphabet, the letters "P" to "U" were the moon level alphabet and the letters "V" to "Z" were the alphabet of time.

The brain in the head (cerebral cortex) was the "E" brain or "YES" brain.

The 31 pairs of spinal nerves were the "A" brain or "NO" brain.

The vagus nerves or "wandering nerves of the stomach" were the "IOU" brain.

The letter "I" meant sun level.

The letter "O" meant planet level.

The letter "U" meant moon level.

Much guff was made out of the letters “IOU” to mean that the universe and god had given us a life and we had to spend that life paying back for the privilege of having a life. We were told to have a “life of service” and that service must be to the Emin, not to some charity or community project which we might have taken a liking to.

I rebelled. I signed up at a local volunteer bureau near where I lived in Morden and began doing odd jobs and gardening to help old people. The Emin leaders frowned upon this. That was the time when I was nearly ready to bite the bullet and leave the Emin. One of the church halls where the Emin used to meet was at Saint Saviour’s in Chalk Farm. By coincidence the same hall was also used by the Central School of Speech and Drama when I went there in 1987.

The course I signed up for at Central School was the Sesame course. We were studying Rudolf Laban Movement with drama classes and psychopathology. We were also studying Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales.

The Sesame tutors there were very fond of saying that “Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious” which is a paraphrase of Freud’s statement that “The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind.”

Freud began writing “The Interpretation of Dreams” near Grinzing in Austria, a land of wild forests and little villages with all the distinctive styles of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire. Freud’s life overlapped with that of the Brothers Grimm and the land in which Freud was writing about dreams and symbology was that very land copied and re-copied by Walt Disney, Neil Gaiman and others. Freud was named after Sigmund, a mythological warrior who copulated and produced an offspring with his sister.

This is the dreamworld which is handed to us by Disneyland (owners of the cartoon Cinderella) and Warner Brothers (owners of The Sandman series of comics). These two giant American corporations will tell us what to fantasise and what to dream. This is the land where we are popularly supposed to visit in our dreams. The land of a million knock-offs. The image of the Holy Roman Empire filtered through an uncountable number of hack versions of dragon slayers, good witches, evil magicians, weird hermits, vampires, ghouls, trolls, predators, princesses, lovers, magic rings, enchanted swords and demonic forces. The imitators of Tolkien and Lord Dunsany have marketed and remarketed these tropes and stereotypes endlessly flogging the dead horse of nightmare.

More recently the gold miners of these stories have opened up a new vein centred on the transition between the age of romance and the age of steam. Watch them run down to platform one to jump someone else’s train to the (skewed and screwed) future.

The woman who founded the Sesame course was named Marion Lindquist but preferred everyone to call her “Billy”. She had very strong views about the sort of mythology we should refer to in our drama/movement work. She approved of the oral tradition of folk tales and fairy stories. She believed that this oral tradition was of the Collective Unconscious. On the other hand she had a negative opinion of characters and situations from novels and from stories made up by an individual author. The unconscious of the individual writer was, she felt, of no use in therapeutic drama because the individual wasn’t “universal”. She also

thought that the myths we work with should be from the European and Germanic tradition but not the African one because she thought we were somehow “not connected” to the African one. Her prejudices were white European centric and she told us that she once had to fail a young black man who took the Sesame course because he insisted on telling the drama session participants that we would begin with everyone “deep down in the earth, ready to grow upward towards the light”. Marion Lindquist said that he was wrong to say that. She decided that he was wrong to have everyone “down in the earth” because, in her opinion, we are Europeans in a European culture and, as such, we must accept that good things come from above, from God in the sky, not from down in the earth. She said that the young black man was wrong because he had an African collective unconscious which, she said, “might be different”.

Billy was the law, the governor, the boss, the authoritative voice as far as the Sesame tutors were concerned. No-one argued with her.

I felt glad that it was only a one-year course.

I could happily fail the bloody thing through persistent disagreement and walk out with my head held high (metaphorically, although I actually enjoy a good slouch for preference).